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SUBJECT: HEAD OF AFGHAN SENATE CONDEMNS PAKISTAN DURING  
VISIT TO FRANCE

REF: PARIS 6542

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt  
for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: In private meetings at the French Senate and MFA November 14-16, head of the Afghan Senate Sibghatullah Mujaddedi had only one aim: forcefully and obsessively to denounce alleged Pakistani support of Taliban insurgents and to call for international condemnation of Pakistan. The impression his broken-record performance left behind was decidedly weak, however, especially when compared with the earlier visit of an engaging Yunus Qanooni, Mujaddedi's counterpart in the lower house. The French Senate sought to reinforce the need for the development of an effective Afghan Parliament, while MFA interlocutors emphasized France's three principle areas of reconstruction interest: agriculture, public health and education. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) During a three-day visit to France, November 14-16, head of the Afghan Senate Sibghatullah Mujaddedi, accompanied by three other Afghan senators, met with French Senate President Christian Poncelet, the French Senate's nine-member Afghanistan Friendship Group, and Brigitte Girardin, Minister-Delegate for Cooperation, Development and Francophony at the MFA. The group also visited the city of Dijon, home to one of the friendship group's members, where they were shown how local governments can administer independently while remaining under the overall authority of the central government, explained Jerome Cauchard, diplomatic advisor to the President of the French Senate.

¶3. (SBU) According to Cauchard, Mujaddedi's visit was a part of the French legislature's most recent contribution to SEAL (Support to Establish an Afghan Legislature), a UNDP program for which France is the lead nation. The Senate and National Assembly have already provided technical support and training in both Kabul and in Paris, sponsored a delegation of women parliamentarians to Paris, and hosted Yunus Qanooni, Mujaddedi's counterpart in the lower house. Cauchard said the Senate's goal is to help develop an orderly Afghan parliament that passes laws effectively, respects the views of all its members (particularly women and ethnic minorities), and is sustained by a well trained corps of civil servants. Further, the French Senate hopes to cement an enduring friendship and collaboration with the Afghan parliament.

¶4. (C) According to Sultan Bonyad, Charge at the Afghan Embassy in Paris, Mujaddedi emphasized in all his meetings -- to the point of crowding out other issues -- his conviction that Pakistan is behind most of Afghanistan's ills. He claimed that Pakistan's intelligence agency (ISI) supported and financed "90 percent" of Taliban forces in Afghanistan. Mujaddedi further contended that Taliban and Al Qaeda forces trained in Pakistan and then crossed the border "to kill your (French) sons and our sons." Mujaddedi believes it is

inconceivable that ISI could operate without the full knowledge and support of President Musharraf, Bonyad said. The MFA was not impressed, according to Pierre Fournier, Afghanistan desk officer at the MFA, who dismissed Mujaddedi's arguments as "simplistic."

¶5. (C) Afghan Charge Bonyad claimed to us that, in response to Mujaddedi's venomous criticism of Pakistan, the friendship group's nine French senators said that if India, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan made common cause in the U.N. to condemn Pakistan, France would support them. "France is ready to support peace and security in Afghanistan through the framework of the UN," Bonyad quoted one unnamed French senator as promising. (Note: Under France's constitution, it is the executive, not the legislature, that has responsibility for the conduct of foreign affairs. End note.)

¶6. (C) For her part, Minister Girardin focused on France's interest in three principal areas of Afghan reconstruction: agriculture, public health and education. Military efforts in Afghanistan were not discussed. Fournier described Mujaddedi's meeting with Girardin as a disappointment in comparison with the visit in October of Yunus Qanooni, speaker of the lower house of Parliament, who engaged in a wide-ranging and spirited debate with French Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy on a range of issues facing Afghanistan (reftel). As a side note, Fournier related that -- in what was interpreted by the French more as theatrics than piety -- Mujaddedi interrupted his hour-long meeting with French Minister Girardin twice in order to pray. From the Senate perspective, Cauchard characterized Mujaddedi as "very religious but with an element of moderation...a statesman."

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